

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

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March 30, 2016

The Honorable Matt Dean
Chair, Health and Human Services Finance Division
Minnesota House of Representatives
401 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Chair Dean and Members of the Health and Human Services Finance Division,

I write to strongly oppose HR 2865, authored by Representative Whelan. This bill suspends funding for the Medical Discovery Team initiative, as well as increases in our Rural and Metro Physician Associate Programs, and investments in our Duluth Rural Training and clinical research infrastructure. All of these programs were determined to be priorities by the bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission.

Last year, the legislature approved \$15 million a year for the University of Minnesota to increase the prominence of the Medical School in order to recruit the best and brightest faculty and students, maintain our leadership at the forefront of discovery, and provide high quality patient care. The majority of that funding is being invested in Medical Discovery Teams (MDTs), along with significant investments in rural and underserved training programs to ensure access in all parts of Minnesota.

MDTs are focused on high impact areas of science and the state funding is being used to recruit faculty considered national leaders in their fields. We are currently searching for leaders in four areas: Addiction, the Biology of Aging, Brain Imaging, and Rural/American Indian Health Disparities. These focus areas were selected using an internal and external process and were chosen based on the possibility for significant NIH funding, impact on the field, addressing the nation's and state's greatest health care needs, and opportunities to leverage the University's areas of strength and competitive advantages.

With the state's partnership, we have initiated an aggressive recruitment process. Leaders have interviewed for the director position in all 4 areas and an offer has been extended to one already. An important advantage we have had in attracting accomplished faculty has been the interest and support from the state. This bill damages our recruitment and, if passed, will effectively end the MDT program.

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We have been pleased with the level of interest from world class faculty around the country in joining the University to help us solve big health care problems. But those recruitments are not easy. Without the state's support, we will not have the resources to continue and our pace of improvement will slow considerably.

The University and the Medical School are grateful for the funding for MDTs and our training programs. I hope we can continue to partner in this work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brooks Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "B".

Brooks Jackson, M.D., M.B.A
Dean of the Medical School
Vice President for Health Sciences